



Volume 1, Issue 2
March - April 2003

To email anyone in HRO
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Our web site:
www.discoveringmontana.com/dma/hro
www.state.mt.us/DMA/HRO



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Montana Human Resources Office

"HeRO News"

Editor: MSG John Bennett Graphic Design: OC Barbara Terry

HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER - COL James Hogan

Welcome to the Montana Human Resources Office News letter Volume 1, Issue 2. I invite all readers to give feedback or recommendations on what you would like to see in this publication to the HRO staff directly or through the editor, MSG John Bennett. **Again, Welcome!**

SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST MAJ Troy Frost

If you take nothing else out of this issue of our newsletter make sure you take a look at the information on the Thrift Savings Plan. The open season to enroll or change your contributions to the program began on 15 April and runs through 31 June. I'm as disappointed as you are with the rates of return over the last two years, but we need to consider our contributions as a long-term investment. My advice to you is to contribute the maximum amount possible, currently 13% for FERS employees and 8% for CSRS employees. If you are a FERS employee and aren't contributing at least 5% enroll or increase your contributions now. You may have to pinch pennies now, but you won't regret it when you start looking forward to retirement.

Articles in this issue:

- **Application Help Page on the way**
- **"Performs other Duties as Assigned"**
 - **SmartForce E-learning**
 - **Army Management staff college**
- **Thrift Savings Plan open season starts**
- **New Labor Mangement Agreement**





"The difference between skill and ability is that skill embodies observable, quantifiable, and measurable performance parameters"
Appendix III-3, NGB Technician Qualification Standards

Look for open jobs at:

www.discoveringmontana.com/dma/hro

www.state.mt.us/DMA/HRO

"Other Duties....."

STAFFING

SMS Anne Maroney, OC Barbara Terry, and SSG Keith Herrin

Application Help Sheet:

We are putting together a "help page" on our web site for applicants. If you have any suggestions or seen specific problems to address, please contact us, we'd love to get your questions and input!

Application Information:

- It is this WRITTEN DOCUMENT which we use to determine qualification and pay grade. If it is not written down on your application, you may not get credit for experience, abilities, knowledge, or skills that you may have!
- Any attachment to an application is considered part of the application. We cannot make any changes to your application after the closing day of the vacancy – there are NO exceptions made to this! Attachments allowed include additional pages to answer blocks 8, 9, and 10, resumes, letters of interest, letters of recommendations, and college transcripts.
- Be as descriptive as you can when answering the KSAs, General and Specialized experience and use all of your experience to validate your skills, abilities and knowledge. Remember to use "non-paid" experiences such as volunteering for church or community services, home experience, and even work you did beyond the last three jobs you listed in the front of the form. (If you use extra experience to answer a KSA, make SURE to include the job or experience information in "Additional Information" area of the form).

When at all possible, come into HRO and have a staffer look through your application before you turn it in. The staffing team will be able to advise you on any areas or answers you may need to explain or where you may need to add additional details.

SUGGESTED READING MATERIAL: All of Section 7 of the Labor Management Agreement for policies concerning vacancies and applications.

CLASSIFICATION - SMS Wayne Losing

Use of the Term "Performs Other Duties As Assigned"

A position description (PD) documents the major duties, responsibilities, and organizational relationships of a job. It serves as the official record of the classification of the job and is used to make many other personnel decisions. PDs should be written in clear, concise, and easy to understand language. Because minor duties normally do not affect the classification of a position, are usually less important to work operations, and change frequently, it is generally not necessary to mention them in the PD. Therefore, the statement "Performs other duties as assigned" is included in many PDs to cover such situations. These duties do not have to be related to the primary purpose of the position, but good judgment should be exercised when making such assignments. It is important to note that management retains the right to assign work regardless of whether the duties are contained in the PD, or whether the PD contains the phrase "Performs other duties as assigned."

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT - SGT Cindy Thurston

Upcoming Training Events:

New Employee Orientation – 22 APRIL 2003 Helena (AFRC)

Statewide visits: April, May, June 2003

Maybe you're looking for classes that could lead to a new job in IT. Maybe you've always wanted to learn more about investing and personal finance. Or maybe you want to develop your interpersonal skills.

The new SmartForce e-Learning initiative, brought to you by the Headquarters Department of the Army Office of the CIO-G6, allows you to choose from 1500 courses in three areas: IT, Business Skills, and Personal Development. All courses are 100% free - and you can take as many as you want. All you need is an Internet connection.

IT has over 1100 courses that cover everything from beginning Microsoft Office to obtaining advanced certification.

The Business Skills section includes courses in management, human resources, accounting, investing, and financing.

Personal Development offers everything from the fundamentals of personal finance to 'Getting Hired' and 'Conflict Management.'

Sign me up

1. Log on to Smart Force (<https://www.atrrs.army.mil/channels/eLearning/smartforce/>)
2. Choose 'ATRRS Application' or 'Register for SmartForce'
3. Read the eligibility requirements and click 'Continue'
4. Enter your AKO username and password; click 'Submit'
5. When your registration has been processed, you will receive two emails at your AKO account. The first has your SmartForce username and the link to access SmartForce. The second email contains your password.
6. You are now ready to logon to SmartForce. It is highly recommended that you click on the 'Take a Tour' icon at the bottom right of the page to learn how to navigate the site and access courses.
7. For Air members, you can also jump to <http://214.3.105.142/default.asp> for registration.

LOOKING FOR FINANCIAL AID...

Post secondary education is expensive (that's news, isn't it), and there are many sources of information concerning how to ease some of that burden. One potential source is the "FreSch! The Free Scholarship Information Service Newsletter," which you can subscribe to (free) on the internet (those of you on the Military Counselor network have seen this). "FreSch!" can be found at <http://www.freschinfo.com>. The newsletter lists new scholarships, advice on applying, and other sites to check out. Below are some web sites that have been researched and suggested by Leslie Higgins, an education counselor at Navy Campus Newport. Whether for yourself, your family, or a unit member, these sites can be a place to start looking for a financial aid program that will meet your needs.



There must be something you want to learn!

Tell me more

Click link to start...



For web links and more information on financial aid, see SGT Cindy Thurston.

**Sustaining Base
Leadership and
Management
Resident,
Nonresident
Programs
Application
Deadline Nears**

FORT BELVOIR, VA. (ARMY MANAGEMENT STAFF COLLEGE) --Applicants have until June 2, 2003 to apply for the Sustaining Base Leadership and Management resident program, Class 03-3, which runs from Sep. 15 through Dec. 10, 2003 or the nonresident program, Class NR04, which runs from Aug. 18, 2003 through July 28, 2004.

SBLM is one of the most comprehensive, dynamic programs available for today's Army leaders. If you are a highly motivated GS-12 through 14 who is interested in career progression and a higher level of responsibility, consider applying for the SBLM program, which is endorsed by the Center for Army Leadership and is a critical career step for senior Army civilians. GS-11s and 15s are welcome to apply by exception. Majors and lieutenant colonels, chief warrant officers, sergeants major or command sergeants major can apply through their branch managers.

To apply for the program or to find out more about it, visit <http://www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil>. If you have any questions, please contact the Registrar's Office at 703-805-4757/56.

**EMPLOYEE RELATIONS
SFC Sharon Kaberline, MSgt Robert Gregori**

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) open season is from Apr 15, 2003 - Jun 31, 2003. During this open season, you may elect to begin contributing to the TSP, change the amount of your TSP contributions, or allocate TSP contributions to your account among the three investment funds. Maximum is 13% for FERS and 8% for CSRS.

You may invest all or any portion of your TSP contributions in any of the five TSP investment funds: the Government Securities Investment (G) Fund, the Common Stock Index Investment (C) Fund, the Fixed Income Index Investment (F) Fund, the Small capitalization Stock Index Investment (S) Fund and the International Stock Index Investment (I) Fund. This is true whether you are covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) or the Civil Service Retirement system (CSRS).

Your investment election applies to all contributions to your TSP Account, i.e., Employee, Agency Automatic (1%), and Agency Matching contributions. However, even if you are not making Employee Contributions, you may still make a TSP election to invest all or any portion of your Agency Automatic (1%) contributions in any of the five funds. This is true even if you are not able to make an election to contribute this open season because you stopped contribution after Jun 30, 2002.

To make an open season election, submit a completed Election Form, TSP-1, to the Human Resource Office (HRO). You can obtain this form from the HRO. Due to recent changes your fund allocations (i.e. G,F,C,S, and/or I) will be done separately from the TSP-1 utilizing the TSP-50, Investment Allocation which is submitted **directly to the TSP Office**. There is now the option of allocating your contribution via the ThriftLine (504) 255-8777 or the TSP web site at <http://www.tsp.gov>

If the HRO accepts your election before May 31, 2003, it will be effective Jun 01, 2003. The paycheck you receive Jun 20, 2003 (AIR) Jun 26, 2003 (ARMY) will reflect this election. If you make an open season election after this date, it will be effective on the first day of the first full pay period after it has been accepted by the HRO. For this open season, an election cannot be accepted after Jun 30, 2003.

The booklet, Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan for Federal Employees," dated May 2002, describes the TSP in detail. Copies of this publication were distributed to every technician employed in the Spring 2001 Open Season and provided to each new hire since. Please read it before making a TSP election. If you have misplaced your copy you may download it along with "veritable plethora" of information at the TSP website at www.tsp.gov.

**THRIFT SAVINGS
PLAN**

**How the investment
opportunity affects FERS
employees.**

**How to make an open
season election**

**When open season elections
become effective**

**Where to get more
information about the TSP**

TSP continued

Changes made through use of the TSP-1 affect only **the amount of future payroll contributions**. If you want to make changes to existing funds or the allocation of future funds, **you must use the Thriftline, web site or TSP-50. To use the Thriftline or web site, you must know your PIN. If you do not know your pin go to the web site or call the Thriftline and request one. TSP-50's are available in the HRO offices, but are the least preferable method to make changes. REMEMBER interfund transfers do not affect payroll contributions and payroll contribution elections to not affect existing funds.**

If you have any questions about the TSP contact Robert Gregori/ Sharon Kaberline at (406) 324-3131/3130, DSN 324-3131/3130, 120th FW personnel may also contact Rebecca Skinner at x2243.

TSP limits

(Excerpts from an article By Brian Friel in GovExec)

If you are in the Civil Service Retirement System, then you can contribute up to 8 percent of your paycheck into the TSP, up to an annual limit of \$12,000. You have to make \$150,000 a year to be affected by the annual limit.

If you are in the Federal Employees Retirement System, then you can contribute up to 13 percent of your paycheck to the TSP, up to the \$12,000 annual limit. You have to make \$92,307 to be affected by the annual limit.

If you are affected by the annual limit, you can divide the \$12,000 limit by 26 (the number of biweekly pay periods in 2003) and max out your contributions at \$462 per paycheck. You'll want to select a dollar amount rather than a percentage because **if you hit the annual limit before the end of the year, then you won't receive matching contributions from your agency for the last few pay periods of the year.** Agencies match TSP contributions on up to 5 percent of pay *per pay period*.

In a simplified example, say you make \$120,000 a year and are in the Federal Employees Retirement System. That means you can contribute up to 13 percent per pay period to your TSP account. **But if you opt to contribute 13 percent per pay period, then you would hit the \$12,000 annual limit after 20 pay periods.** You would lose out on six weeks of matching contributions. Since agencies put up 4 percent of your pay on the first 5 percent of pay per pay period, you would lose out on about \$1,100 in matching contributions. Instead, you can opt to contribute \$462 per paycheck to the TSP and collect all of the matching contributions that you're able to.

(For more on maxing out on TSP contributions, see the TSP fact sheet, [Annual Limit on Elective Deferrals](#).)

From April 15 to June 30, the TSP will hold an open season. During this open season, you can worry about the catch-up contributions. If you've maxed out your per-paycheck contributions at 13 percent or 8 percent of pay, you'll be able to increase your contributions so that another \$2,000 is withheld from your paychecks during the second half of the year. If you've maxed out so that you'll hit the \$12,000 standard annual limit during the last pay period of the year, you'll be able to increase your contributions so that you'll have contributed \$14,000 by the end of the year and still collected all of your agency's matching contributions.

	G Fund	F Fund	C Fund	S Fund	I Fund
March 2003	0.33%	(0.05%)	0.97%	1.55%	(1.90%)
<u>Last 12 Months*</u> (4/1/2002 - 3/31/2003)	4.69%	11.79%	(24.71%)	(22.38%)	(23.51%)

* The G, F, C, S, and I Fund returns for the last twelve months assume, except for the crediting of earnings, unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month, and assume earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.

Interfund Transfers

Attention federal workers who turn 50 next year:

You'll be able to put up to \$14,000 into your Thrift Savings Plan account in 2003!

Rates of Return as of April 3, 2003

**New Employee
Assistance Provider
for the Technicians
Changes on 01 April
2003**

Effective 01 April 2003 the Employee Assistance provider has been changed from GreenSpring to ComPsych. The menu options will be even better and more services available for Technicians. The toll free, confidential number is 1-888-290-4EAP (327). Information regarding the new carrier will be distributed by name to every technician as soon as it is available. On site employee and supervisor training will also be forthcoming. There is a web site available with information regarding the many areas available. The address is www.guidanceresources.com. If you have any questions about the EAP contact Robert Gregori/ Sharon Kaberline at (406) 324-3131/3130, DSN 324-3131/3130, 120th FW personnel may also contact Rebecca Skinner at x2243.

**UNIFORMED
SERVICES
EMPLOYMENT AND
REEMPLOYMENT
RIGHTS (USERRA)**

Technicians who will be in a LWOP-Us Separation Military status for more than a full pay-period should receive a full USERRA briefing regarding restoration rights and benefits prior to deploying. Please contact MSG Robert Gregori/SFC Sharon Kaberline (406) 324-3131/3130 DSN 324-3131/3130 or SRA Rebecca Skinner x2243 (Air Guard technicians only) as soon as possible.

LABOR RELATIONS SPECIALIST - SSG Thomas Mahoney

New Labor Management Agreement!

The Labor and Management Air Guard negotiation teams met on 4,5,6 March and completed the negotiations on the new collective bargaining agreement. Labor held a meeting on March 18 with their membership to ratify this agreement. The agreement was ratified and both teams met in Helena with the Adjutant General on 27 March. The Adjutant General thanked the teams for their time and dedication during negotiations and endorsed the agreement.

The contract has been sent forward to the Department of Civilian Personnel Management Services (DCPMS) for review. This review process may take 30 days. The new contract will be in effect for 3 years from the date approved by DCPMS.

This was the first contract negotiation for me as the Labor Relations Specialist. My past memories as a labor negotiation team member or alternate left me a little nervous. My worries were soon put to rest as both parties negotiated in a professional manner. Chief Negotiators Col. Mark Meyer and Mr. Paul Meier had their teams prepared which made for progressive dialogue.

These negotiations took place in the new Army National Guard Armory, located adjacent to Malmstrom Air Force Base, which houses Co. B 1/163 Infantry unit. The Army staff and facility were outstanding. This off site location let the teams stay focused and greatly contributed to the success of these negotiations.

STATE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT MANAGER - Ms. Linda Kortum

HELENA EEO COUNSELORS:

SGM RONDA SCOTT, 324-3274
SSG DAN KERPA, 324-3294

GREAT FALLS EEO COUNSELORS:

MSG LEROY ATCHISON, 791-2213
MSG MARK REAGOR, 791-2429
SMS ANGIE LAMIE, 791-2183



ACTIVE GUARD RESERVES
SGM Gary Morgan, SGT Timothy McCoy

Congratulations
SSG Conway with his new endeavors with Troop command;
Good luck Nick!!

Common Web Sites Used (other than our own):

<https://gko.ngb.army.mil/> Guardnet

<http://opm.gov/> OPM

<http://www.usapa.army.mil/> Army Regs/pubs

<http://www.army.mil/ako/> AKO

<http://www.tsp.gov> TSP



The "HeRO News" will be a bimonthly publication that we take great pride in. Our goal is to ensure our customers are getting the most up to date information, with frequently used web sites and POC's in the HRO arena. We're here to serve you and the great State of Montana!

We welcome all suggestions or inputs. Please feel free to email MSG Bennett at john.bennett@mtgrea.ang.af.mil or by phone at 324-3116.

